

Graduate Certificate in Narrative Therapy
Dulwich Centre, Australia
E-learning program

10 STORIES, ONE NARRATION

We go through hard times holding on our hopes and dreams.
(a research honoring Greek people's skills of claiming their lives
from the bad effects of the financial crisis)

FINAL WRITTEN PROJECT

BY MARGARITA KATSIKADELIS

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INTRODUCTION

How came the idea of my project; what is its aim

When I first came in touch with narrative theory and practice, I was impressed with how abuse and hardship were interpreted. M.White supports that 'There is no excuse for people to experience re-dramatization within the context of therapy. Distress yes, re-traumatization no. I believe that the notion of healing practices based on the imperative of returning to the site of the abuse in order to re-experience this, is a highly questionable notion and as well as dangerous...'

'...At the time that these people were subjected to abuse they had no choice or power and they were trapped. Under these circumstances many developed fantastic mechanisms that allowed them to escape the abusive context.'

'Narrative therapists can play some part in assisting their consultants to break their lives away from the very negative personal stories and step into some other more positive account of who they might be as a person and then it will become possible for them to engage in the reinterpretation of the abuse they were subjected to.'

So, people have the opportunity 'to stand on a different territory' according to Michael White. Their experiences of abuse, exploitation, tyranny, torture or violence are reinterpreted as 'acts to address injustice and violence and passion for justice'(M. White, 1995a,p.85)

Honoring these special skills and the personal qualities people develop when they are faced with abuse and hardship was my inspiration for the choice of the subject of this project.

I am Greek and all my compatriots were found within the turbulence of a tremendous financial crisis which changed all things we had taken for granted. My readings on conversations with AIDS AND CARE and the work of Care counselors ('Little by little, we make a bundle', 150) gave me the idea of proceeding with this project having as main subject 'to move from an identity of crisis to an identity of courage hope and dream.' (Charles Kochala, in conversation 1996,'Little by little , we make a bundle')

I wanted to explore the ways Crisis is creeping into Greek society and the steps that could be taken to prevent this through my research. By personifying the problem of the crisis and providing a focus for uniting the community me, as a 'hope counselor' intended to provide an opportunity to the participants of the research to get more in contact with their own stories of resistance to the Crisis bad effects.

The first step of my research: externalizing the problem of the crisis: Why externalizing?

I set up a questionnaire and got involved in externalizing conversations about the Crisis problem within a community of 10 persons chosen randomly from all walks of life. My intention was to assist people to get in touch with preferred stories of their identity.

During the interviews I had the chance to experience hope and sadness with other people.

And I was inspired by the steps that people take in reclaiming their lives from the Crisis bad effects and in having 'the last say' about who they are.

I found out that externalizing conversations helped them find options and give voice to their experiences of abuse in ways that are profoundly healing to them. During these interviews , I was able to explore along with them what this Crisis says about who they are as people , how it had affected their lives , their bodies , their thoughts , how it interferes with their relationships with others and together explore the processes by which a person was recruited into self-blame and shame. Crisis, as every process of abuse, had used knowledge, strategies and techniques. Therefore, the aim of these externalizing questions was to deconstruct 'the problem'.

Once the Crisis abuse knowledge was established in their specificity the people participating in the team research were facilitated to develop a degree of discernment and distinguish these actions that are exploitative abusive and neglectful from those actions that are supportive, loving or caring. Consequently, they were able to expand to the possibilities to take action, to resist and to challenge these knowledge and practices in their day -to-day lives.

Proceeding to the second step; the point of entry in the people's alternative story lines

At this point, having deconstructed the problem of the Crisis by introducing certain questions, I invited these people to continue to develop and tell stories about their lives and help them to include 'some of the more neglected but potentially significant events and experiences that are out of phase with their dominant storylines (M.White, 1995, 'Maps of Narrative Practice', p61)

These events and experiences can be considered as 'unique outcomes' or exceptions and they provided 'a point of entry' to their alternative storylines. Through the following questionnaire I encouraged the members of the research team to 'recruit their lived experience, to stretch their minds, to exercise their imagination and to employ their meaning-making resources' (M.White, 1995, 'Maps of Narrative Practice', p61-62). People got excited by these aspects of their lives and relationships previously remained unnoticed. These alternative stories having roots in history provided people with a foundation in facing the problems Crisis has provoked in their lives .These alternative stories plot was composed by the concepts of landscape of action and landscape of consciousness according to Bruner. Bruner, having borrowed to a large extent from the literary theorists Griemas and Courtes (1976) proposed that stories are principally composed of two landscapes:

The landscape of action is composed of the sequence of events that make up the plot and the underlying theme. The landscape of consciousness (identity according to M.White) is composed of what those involved in the action know, think, or feel or do not know, think or feel (Bruner, 1986 p. 14)

There is correlation between the structure of literary texts and the structure of therapeutic practice.

The authors of texts draw the attention of the reader to gaps in the storyline and invite readers to fill in these gaps 'by stretching their minds, by exercising their imagination and by recruiting their lived experience' (Bruner, 1978, p80)

In the way that good authors are motivated by the fulfillment of these gaps, the therapists concentrate on rich story development. During the interviews of my research I put emphasis on constructing these gaps, the 'subordinate' storylines of the people's lives and encouraged them to fill in these gaps in the way the authors do. In the context of my project I was amazed how these conversations contribute to the rich development of the people's alternative storylines. Exploring the landscape of identity and more specifically using intentional questions, I was brought to privilege people participating in the research team to express what is important to them, namely their values, intentions, goals, dreams, hopes, beliefs which are all linked with selected meaningful events of their lives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. WHEN DID YOU FIRST NOTICE THE 'CRISIS' IN YOUR LIFE?
2. HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?
3. HAS THE CRISIS GOT ANY ALLIES?
4. HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOUR LIFE? (SELF-IMAGE, WORK, LIFESTYLE, MOOD, FEELINGS, SOCIAL LIFE)
5. WHEN DOES IT BECOME STRONGER?
- *6. HOW DO YOU EVALUATE YOUR EXPERIENCE CONCERNING THE CRISIS?
- *7. HOW DO YOU RESIST?
- *8. ARE THERE TIMES WHEN YOU KEEP THE HOPE ALIVE?
- *9. COULD YOU RELATE A STORY WHICH DESCRIBES THIS (WHEN , WHERE , DURATION ETC.)
- **10. WHICH INTENTIONS AND PURPOSES HAVE LED YOU TO THIS?
- **11. WHICH VALUES AND BELIEFS ARE CONNECTED TO THOSE VALUES?
- **12. WHICH DREAMS AND HOPES OF YOURS ARE CONNECTED TO THOSE VALUES?
- **13. ARE THERE LIFE PRINCIPALS THAT ARE EXPRESSED THROUGH THESE HOPES AND DREAMS?
- **14. WHICH COMMITMENT DO YOU STAND BY IN YOUR LIFE?
15. HOW WOULD YOU TITLE THIS ALTERNATIVE STORY OF YOURS?

*Note 1: The questions 6-9 provided a point of entry to the people's alternative storylines. **Note 2: The questions 10-14 called 'intentional' questions enable people to a rich acknowledgement of their own intentions, values beliefs, dreams, hopes, principles and commitments.

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE BASED ON MY INTERVIEW'S NOTES

ARITI'S CASE

1. First realized the Crisis in her work in 2010 /decrease of work shift /end of vacations.
2. She has been through this for the last 4 years.
3. Crisis' allies are fear, insecurity, the thought 'nothing will change', unemployment.
4. I gave up smiling / my husband left to America to find a job. Decrease of the expectations/ RE-SET: I look at things through another aspect discovered different values . Spend more time with my children / don't drive them to the playground.
5. It gets more intense when she has to pay the mortgage for the house.
6. My experience is something in between.
7. I resist to the Crisis with re-set; anability I developed through seminars / therapy sessions / I saw my needs / didn't want to remain backwards.
8. Breaking norms. She closed her ears to the negativity.
9. Her story an idea of making her own job / the construction of her website / more quality guided tours to foreigners who visit Greece.
10. Not feel hanging on the line/ be financially independent.
11. Loyalty/ honesty / quality / offering pleasure to others.
12. Through this project my dreams are coming true; things to last, to be meaningful / original.
13. Straightforwardness, truth, to be sincere, all this is equals to hope
14. I commit to aim / willingness/ redetermination.
15. The name of my story is RE-SET and because I am half Greek / half Japanese I am getting closer to the light, 'siphon no haji, isshono' in Japanese.

1. ARITI'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

RE-SET: HER RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS BAD EFFECTS

I first realized the Crisis effects at my work. I have been through it for the last 4 years. I think Crisis allies are fear, insecurity, negative thoughts like 'nothing will change' and unemployment. I gave up smiling, my husband was compelled to leave to America. I had to lower my expectations.

There is something positive despite all this. I started over and I look at the things through another point of view. I also convinced myself that there are values like spending quality time with my children. I play games with them. I stopped driving them to the playground.

When I have to pay my mortgage, it gets more intense. Additionally, there are more taxes, my husband's departure to America and less comfort.

I respond to the Crisis effects by getting help from effective parenting seminars and being in therapy. Another skill that I developed was the breaking of norms: I closed my ears to negativity. I stayed away from persons with negative thinking.

My story about re-set is the following: I developed the idea of starting my own job: the construction of my personal website. Guided tours with more quality service to foreigners who visit Greece. I wanted to give quality to my job, to be financially independent, not feel hanging on the line. My beliefs are related to loyalty, honesty and quality and offering satisfactory services to tourists visiting our country.

Through this project my dreams are coming true and my hopes are: I want things to have quality and to be meaningful, original and valuable. This story is related to my principals: honesty, straightwardness, truth. I commit to this aim with willingness and redetermination. In this way I'm getting closer to the light.

2. ELISABETH'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

'THERE IS SOME RESPONSE TO YOUR EFFORT'

I first realized the Crisis when I was looking for a job two years ago. I have seen its side effects through my family. It affected my self image, I experienced disappointment, anxiety and self- cancellation.

Some thoughts about how long it is going to last sustained its effects and anxiety about whether there will be an end to all this adventure. It was more intense when I found myself without resources and this was an obstacle to realize my projects.

I find its effects quite negative, therefore I don't lose sight of my targets despite the hardship. I respond to the Crisis effects by planning, setting priorities, when anxiety is lessened, when I deal with this and I don't remain stuck.

My story is about my job. I was involved in the education of a child with cerebral problems. I had a strong desire to get involved with children. I developed my skills of linking with others. I used a lot of my knowledge in my work and a lot of consciousness.

I wanted to have experience in my profession .It was about my belief to adjust myself to the demands of my job. My commitment was not to deceive the others and be superficial.

3. EVI'S STORY OF RESISTANCE:

LOVE, EMPATHY , SUPPORT

I realized the presence of the Crisis when I had to live on 500 Euros per month in 2010. The transition was very difficult. I had a feeling of vanity relating to destruction and collapse.

For me, Crisis allies are: self-closure , depression , fortification and the norm : I don't want to spread my misery and burden to the others . I try to be left unnoticed.

It affects me because it makes me feel weaker. I have also missed the sense of progress, pleasure, creativity like having exhibitions etc. I am all the time on the lookout for inexpensive places to hung out. I have missed my social life as well.

I am determined not to surrender for any Crisis in the world. I tell my self 'I won't be restricted to home and **here is a story about it.** We didn't give up with hanging out, so we sat on the doorway of a large department store watching the people passing by, laughing, gossiping, buying a bottle of water , smoking and having fun.

Furthermore, there are **other stories of resistance** that I recall. It's about closeness and camaraderie with old colleagues and friends.

During the last but one comics festival we held, it was an old friend who found a sponsorship on his own initiative and introduced us to a fundraiser without any benefit for his own sake.

I evaluate the Crisis effects as something in between because I think it's a chance for solidarity to be expressed. The story goes on with solidarity and resistance to the Crisis in my life. A handful of friends offered to help us clean the exhibition building.

We got along very well with these friends and I in turn helped them decorate their recently opened café. I expressed myself in this store by arranging posters and silk prints. We occasionally hung out in this café and we never have to pay a penny.

4. IRINI'S STORY OF RESISTANCE; INTERACTION WITH FEELINGS THE CHOCOLATE – PIE

I felt the Crisis in my life with the decrease in my salary and working shift. I am having less expenses and more focus on spending money in elementary needs like food, clothes, and bills.

And then there were the surroundings: misery, no food, no medicine. My relatives were without a cooker when it broke down and were unemployed as well.

It became stronger with my husband's volume of work which has decreased enormously and of course the birth of our child.

Above all, there was a feeling of misery and intensive economizing. Especially in the beginning of each month, I get my salary, I pay all my expenses and I have to spend the rest of the month with pocket-money. It affects my mood;

I abandoned my appearance and I gave up my lovely interests such as painting and working out and I limited going on vacations and entertainment.

This Crisis causes a lot of stress and anxiety in my relationships with the others. I think it has definitely negative effects and there is only a positive thing; a restriction in excessive consumerism.

Therefore, there are times when Crisis is totally absent. This occurs at the family's gatherings during my visits to my husband's aunts. These aunts have no income and their children are unemployed. While there, I keep the hope that we can become more humane.

I can recall a story **which is repeated all the time**. I remember it was the last summer in the morning and I was preparing my favorite chocolate pie. So I had cookies, chocolate, butter before me, I was wearing a lap, I had my ponytails. I still have the aroma of the black chocolate, butter cream and orange sweet. I arrange the mix in the pan and I am feeling a tremendous joy, warmth and creativity. I go there, I offer my pie and I tell them 'you can keep the pan'.

I witness my relatives tasting the pie and crying out full of joy 'it's extremely delicious'.

There is a skill of mine in this story. It has to do with my ability 'to give and receive joy'. This skill is related to my personal values, as being carefree and getting away from trouble and pressure.

There are also dreams related to these values like developing human relationships. The story I recalled is based on some principals of mine. 'All people have the right to live a life with dignity '.

I stand on a commitment which holds me in touch with other people with emotional interaction.

5. LEDA'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

THE ADVENTURES OF A HAPPY LIFE

I first realized the Crisis in 2011 with the decrease of my salary. It has been in my life for the last 3 years. It's allies are: insecurity, severe assessment and a threat to be fired. It has been affecting my whole life. This Crisis got intensified when a kind colleague of mine was made redundant. I felt depressed.

The positive thing is that I gathered myself. I developed the skill of distinguishing what is important in my life. I became more cautious relating to my work. I came to accept the situation and started to feel empathy for all those who are in need. I took advantage of the positive aspects of the Crisis.

I resisted thanks to my values which supported me during this time of hardship. These are: mutual respect at work and anywhere else and self-containment regarding the financial aspect.

My hopes and dreams are: I carry on trying to avoid making dreams that concern the very distant future. I hold on to the hope that my child will live in a secure and tender environment. If only she could have the right qualifications in her life!!

I feel I have the choice, and I have the liberty to make choices. I have love, protection, and good health.

My commitment is that I will spoil my child! I will give her as much love as I have because love shields us. It makes us stronger.

6. KOSTAS STORY OF RESISTANCE

'CAMARADERIE: 'US AGAINST THE 'WORLD'

I became aware of the Crisis through the change in the behavior of the others 3 years ago. It has been affecting my social life. My friends are not as available as they used to be.

While hanging out, our communication was getting worse .I mirrored their mood which was a sad one. I think that the Crisis allies in my case were: the death of my mother, emotional troubles, my brother's psychological problems and the most important ally is my empathy for the others.

Therefore, I find a positive side in the crisis: Firstly, I can easily find bargains, secondly my self- image has improved, seeing myself professionally successful among so many people struggling. Additionally my hopes are sustained by my belief that the Crisis will end soon.

My story responding to the Crisis is' a Love affair'. In the hospital where my mother was treated, my relationship with a girl became more intense. This closeness lasted for one month. It was the rosy stage and I was wearing the 'rosy glasses'.

I felt this way because there was a long history with this specific person. A long term contact, lengthy discussions, feelings and entertainment led me to experience this love story.

There were values on which this course was based: camaraderie, humor and sharing intimate confessions.

Now, that I am seeing from afar, I can recall skills which contributed to my love story such as maturity, acceptance, trust , seriousness , the ability to connect and dig deep into another soul , empathize , address serious problems.

Although it wasn't a plain – sailing relationship I insisted as my core principal is resumed in the motto 'life might bring us difficulties but we manage to fight them and beat them.'

My intention was to fulfill my dream which was to find a soul mate and the sense of belonging .My dream was to share myself with someone 'camaraderie ' and the motto 'us against the world'. Furthermore, I had a desire for support and sharing in joy and sorrow. One thing is for sure; I wanted to commit myself to another human being, to enter another human being's world and let her enter mine.

VOULA'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

'STARING AT THE BLUE SKY!'

I have been through the Crisis for the last 5 years and I realized it by my surroundings and the decrease of my salary. The Crisis has got more intense since I retired and I have a lot of leisure time.

It affects me more than ever now that I am retired and I feel sitting on the sidelines. It's the lack of roles as well; I am not a teacher any more.

It is getting even stronger when I pay my taxes or when I miss hanging out or getting presents which was my favorite hobby. I evaluate the Crisis effects as very negative ones, however there is something positive: Values such as friendship and family bonds come bouncing back.

My resistance is to give love, support and stay cool. I hold on to hope! Here is my story: I was on vacations with my husband who is facing health problems. We had rent a little house by the seaside. There was a lot of greenery. I was cooking boiled meat and I was having the aroma in my nostrils. My husband was enjoying his swim. We had set our chairs and umbrella under the sun. It was a 'release life-jacket'!! We enjoyed our life, the nature while staring at the blue sky.

My intentions were not to put myself in second seat. Be healthy, seize the moment, live and be happy. My values which are connected to my intentions are: Loving myself, recognizing myself as a leader and be proud of my family ,my two children who are healthy and bright.

8. ANGELIKA'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

'LOVE ME, MYSELF' INSPIRED FROM THE LYRICS OF A GREEK SONG

I first realized the Crisis effects when I divorced and I was found without financial support. Crisis allies are the 'must', the material world, the priority to the consumer society and the norms: 'to be successful 'and others.

It affected my social life but what most worked for me was solidarity. It also affected my mood since I stayed home. It hurt my self esteem, I felt guilty. I think its effects are negative.

I resisted the Crisis finding a job for 40 days. It was still something because I collected some money and in this way I was able to look for better opportunities. I remember how anxious I was when I applied for this short-term work. I remember being informed by the former employees about my new post and I had mixed feelings. I think I managed to achieve all this by aiming for survival and evolution.

My intentions were to give love to myself and the universe. I stand by the hope that I will find love because I was given love and I hold on to the dream to find love, safety balance and peace.

My principals are: trust, respect and love. My core commitment is respecting myself and my favorite Greek song is 'my dear self, love me!'

9. MARIA-STELLA'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

LIFE, EVOLUTION, MATURITY

I hadn't acknowledged the Crisis because I was faced with more serious problems; my husband's illness for two years and his death. The Crisis allies were: financial problems, my husband's salary and my own salary which were low.

This loss caused a lot of distress. This feeling gets stronger at night when the family used to gather themselves. I think there are bad aspects in the Crisis but my personal crisis is more intense.

My resistance: acceptance of the situation, exploring myself and especially the changes in my temper. My hope which I hold strongly on is love for life itself. When I was myself faced with health problems I was very anxious.

The values that helped me during these challenging moments are: faith in God, trust in living and the knowledge that fear doesn't help me. My dreams and hopes that sustain my beliefs are: advancing in life, my kids to be healthy and me accepting what life brings to my path.

My principals: Realizing my dreams and my desires 'life is love'. A commitment of mine is to live the present, live and mostly offer love to my children.

10. NICKY'S STORY OF RESISTANCE

'LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL'

I first felt the Crisis with the decrease of my salary and work shift. I am half Greek and I was compelled to move to England, where I was born, in order to find a job and means for living. I returned to Greece because I couldn't stand living there and I was missing the Greek sun, my friends, even my soul!

I feel the Crisis getting milder since I found work in Athens in Sept. 2013. I respond to the Crisis by growing close relationship with my husband and family. I overcame it with various discussions which led me to find solutions to my financial problems. I am asking help from my mother and my relatives.

Despite the Crisis I have managed to be happy and enjoy my life spending quality time with my family, especially my grandson. I managed to continue my studies despite my few resources and I had the courage to make this step.

I resist with perseverance, I don't give up! Here is my story about this trait I inherited from my mother. I used to get angry when I listened to her advice: 'in the face of difficulties, just be patient!'. But patience was ingrained to me from the day I was born. Somehow, I took up psychotherapy and began to split up with patience.

Another knowledge appeared: It was respecting myself and the motto 'I deserve better'. Perseverance helped me go on during when I wanted to split up with my husband and my therapist.

Through therapy, I was provided with tools to deal with my problems. My belief related to this story is to improve myself and my relationships with the others And there is also a commitment: I simply owe it to myself!

Singling out their responses to the crisis/Collective knowledge/Collective document

All these narrations brought about the answers to the questionnaire as I intended for them to be heard during a definitional ceremony, each one separately. Moving on, I realized that it would be an exhausting process if the audience was made to listen to ten separate stories and relate to them.

Through the answers to the questionnaire, I singled out their responses, the troubling Crisis effects, their unexpected discoveries , their values/beliefs, their hopes and dreams, their knowledge and skills and their commitments. I wanted all this collective knowledge to be incorporated into a **collective document**. Following, **I will list** their unexpected discoveries , the troubling Crisis effects and specifically the research team responses to the Crisis troubling effects based on their values, hopes, dreams, knowledge, skills and commitments.

TROUBLING CRISIS EFFECTS

- Reduction in salary and working shift
- Less expenses
- Focusing on the bare essentials
- Unemployment , poverty , misery , relatives struggling
- Feeling of hardship
- Very strict economizing
- Abandonment of appearance
- Giving up on favorite hobbies and interests
- Lessening of holiday time.
- Anxiety, concern, insecurity.
- Strict assessment at work , threat of dismissal
- Depression seeing colleagues having to go
- Left without any financial support.
- Fearful that the Crisis will last for long
- Difficulty in materializing of plans.
- Immigration abroad.
- Deprivation of pleasure, progress, creativity.
- Seclusion
- Illness, loss, effect on my social life, mirrored bad mood of others

UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES

- Lessening of consumerism
- Developed the skill to distinguish what is important in life.
- Became more careful at work
- Development of social solidarity
- Reintroduction of traditional values , like friendship and family
- There is another aspect ; Resetting skills
- Bargains, reasonable pricing.
- Accurate assessment of my skills and potential.

RESPONSES TO THE TROUBLING CRISIS EFFECTS

- I developed the idea of creating my own job
- I closed my ears to anything negative
- I spent quality time with my family
- I reset myself- saw things through a different perspective
- I cultivated a close relationship with my husband and my family
- I found courage to move on with my studies
- I enjoyed swimming while watching others do the same
- I cooked delicious meals and sweets
- I offered chocolate pie and took pleasure from doing so
- I went outside, continued to hang out
- I sat on the stairway laughing, chatting and gossiping
- I fell head over heels in love
- I discovered myself
- I singled out what is important to me
- I did my best at work

KNOWLEDGE / SKILLS

- Acceptance to what life brings to my path
- Perseverance and Patience; I won't give up, trait inherited by parents
- The Crisis will end soon
- When I love myself , I will age gracefully
- Life brings us difficulties and hardship but we are here to fight back and beat them; my father's legacy
- Sharing joy and sorrow , camaraderie
- Stand by the others and the others stand by me in turn , solidarity
- Enjoy linking with others
- Resetting skills , Redefining ourselves

DREAMS/ HOPES/ DESIRES

- Things should have originality and be meaningful
- Improve myself as a human being and my relationships with the others
- To age in peace and good health
- To share myself with another human being , companionship; us against the world
- To move on creatively
- My offspring to be healthy and well equipped for the demands of life
- To find love , safety , balance peace

VALUES / BELIEFS

- Honesty , quality , originality
- Loving myself; seeing myself as a leader
- Enjoying life and nature
- Not degrading myself
- Being happy
- Keeping my relationships alive while being in interaction with others
- Everyone to be given equal opportunities in life and have access to dignity
- Having faith in God
- Trusting life
- Mutual respect at work, in relationships, everywhere!
- Self-respect and love.
- Not deceiving others, not to be superficial
- Not to get stuck in hardship

COMMITMENTS

- Fighting alongside others ,not letting them perish
- Living here and now , offering love
- Giving love because it offers us protection
- Being free to choose
- Being pretty , sweet and polite
- All people should being given equal opportunities
- Deserving the best; I owe it to my self
- Improving myself as a human being and my relationships

The elaboration of my research collective document

Within 'Narrative Practice' (White, Epston, 1990) many different types of written documents can be made. Poems, lists, certificates, therapeutic letters and collective documents (D. Denborough, 2008)

I had collected the 10-person responses to the Crisis bad effects because I wanted to share this hard-won knowledge with other people and contribute in this way to the shaping of their identity of hope. That is how the idea of the construction of my research collective document came up.

This idea was about **'Dealing with life while being subjected to the hardship of the Greek Crisis. The special skills and knowledge that sustain ten people chosen randomly within the Greek society.'** This document is double-storied. Its subject involves difficult circumstances, grief and sorrow.

At the same time, it richly conveys the skills and knowledge, values, hopes, dreams of ten people chosen randomly among the Greek populace responding to the bad Crisis effects. The purpose of this document is to collectively convey a range of hard-won skills and knowledge by a rich acknowledgement of the circumstances in which these knowledge have been acquired.

All the members of the team didn't experience the same hardship or use the same forms of sustenance. That's why there is room to enter into the text in a variety of ways.

Phrases such as 'some of us', 'sometimes' leave space to identify themselves with a particular theme or not.

Through this document there are descriptions that are recognizable to the individuals who contributed them. It contains vivid **descriptions of certain images**, for instance:

1. Returning home at night, hanging out in the stairway watching people passing by, chatting, having fun with a bottle of water at hand.
2. (.....) However let's bring them their favorite chocolate pie and be filled with their sweet words.

3. Sitting in the sun, watching my partner swimming while I was enjoying the sunshine under the umbrella

4. (...) sharing endless hours alongside another human being, trying to enter their world and let them enter yours. While generating this document, I tried to pay attention to the grammar I was using in the text. I was brought to interweave the first, the second and the third person. In this way, 'the document wasn't related to an individuality existing independently of others' (D. Denborough) and it would be more inspiring to the outsider witnesses responses since it would be representative of a collective voice.

COLLECTIVE DOCUMENT

DEALING WITH LIFE WHILE BEING SUBJECTED TO THE HARDSHIP OF THE GREEK CRISIS. THE SPECIAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT SUSTAIN TEN PEOPLE CHOSEN RANDOMLY WITHIN THE GREEK SOCIETY.

When the Crisis broke out, our whole world went upside down. Whatever we used to know up to this moment ceased to exist. It was like we woke up in a different life after a long sleep. We were depleted at work as friends and colleagues were let go or made redundant because someone decided they are not useful any more and the Crisis is their fault. Suddenly, beloved people among family and friends went abroad because they were made useless. There was darkness everywhere! We kept having the same discussion everyday: 'We are lost' 'what are we going to do now?'

Some people we treasured passed away, not necessarily due to the Crisis. This loss made our life even darker, the Crisis became more intense and cast its burden on us. 'How are we going to keep on living this way?' 'We should do something' 'Let's respond!'

'Let's not restrict ourselves to home!' said some people and ventured outdoors. 'This way we will get rid of depression' they cried out and went out into the daylight and in the sun. On their way home at night, they found themselves among friends sitting on the stairway, gazing on passers while chatting, having a laugh with a bottle of water. The stairs were rough on their body but what a joyful experience it was!

The mortgage installment was approaching and our pocket was half-empty. **They shared their sorrow** with their family they evaluated the situation and they were able to fill the gaps. They felt cared for, seen, fulfilled.

They turned away and noticed their fellow human being. They were some relatives of theirs who were so affected by unemployment that they couldn't afford to fix the cooker.—**'Let's help purchase** another one. Nevertheless, we should **offer them their favorite chocolate –pie** and be filled with their sweet words of gratitude.

The working hours were dramatically reduced, their husband went abroad and kids requiring care A feeling that you are left hanging on the line, unprotected. It was on this point that inspiration for starting our own business came about. Creativity, resourcefulness, dream and hope overwhelmed us!

The ability to reset our lives launched us to the ninth cloud! –What if I lose my job? – I will find another one. I will create it myself!

For some of us the Crisis was nothing compared to the loss of our beloved ones having passed away. Their loss was invaluable. Even our own life was threatened by pain and sorrow. I woke up the other morning at a **child like smile** opening my way. It's worth it to live in order to see it blossom! It's worth living for life itself!

The more their financial resources, were lessened, the more they got satisfaction by just staring to **the nature**: the greenery path, the house by the seaside where we were hosted for a few days in the summertime and the sea!!! Watching my partner swimming in the deep, me sitting under the umbrella in the sun. I t felt like both redemption and release at the same time!!!

Crisis is nevertheless enduring and we are accompanied by fear! Some of us recalled **our father's legacy** which was 'not giving up in front of difficulty. 'Life may bring hardship in our path but we fight back! 'Some others were angered with their mother who suggested 'patience' in difficult times. Nonetheless, they recalled this value which was ingrained in them. They reinterpreted this adding some **other knowledge** namely loving and respecting ourselves. This was something they learnt seeking within them: We deserve the best! We owe it to ourselves! They said.

What literally terminated darkness inside us was 'falling head over heels in love.' Sharing infinite hours along with another human being, try to enter their world and let them enter yours. The Crisis storm no matter how cunning, couldn't deal with love. While **being on the rosy cloud**, we were untouchables! There was a strong desire for companionship and sharing our joy and sorrow!

They resisted by means of **originality and truth**! They **did their best** at work and found their effort reciprocated.

Leaving their old self behind, they saw the **light** from the other side of the tunnel and glanced at **the sky**, instead of lowering their gaze. Therefore, they realized that dreams come true holding on the hope.

DOCUMENT: THE VALUES THAT WE HAVE RETRIEVED AND HELP US CREATE OUR IDENTITIES DESPITE THE CRISIS TROUBLING EFFECTS

WE LINK OUR LIVES TO OTHERS BY EXPERIENCING LOVE , SUPPORT HUMANITY AND SYMPATHY

LOVE SHIELDS US!!!

Encouraged by friendship and companionship we decided not to give up. The crisis wanted us confined in our home, not being in the mood of seeing anyone and be depressed, tied up and stuck.

Camaraderie provided us with warmth, closeness, carelessness and decisiveness.

We made up our mind to react, not to belittle ourselves, to get rid of depression and open up to others.

Not being able to even afford a cup of coffee, we resorted to hanging out sitting on a stairway.

It was our family bonds that gave us the answer when we had to pay the loan and our pocket was empty.

Being approached by friends and relatives we cared about them in turn when they were in need. Our intention was to sooth the pain and discomfort of the others even by offering them a chocolate pie they would enjoy tasting its sweetness.

Children's smile also played its role in enriching our optimism in facing not only everyday's difficulties but human losses as well!

So, we were made aware of our ability to keep relationships alive!

Love, humanity, support and co-operation are some of the core values we stand for during this tough period of being subjected to the financial crisis effects.

NATURE AS A SUPPORTER IN DIFFICULTIES

Before the advent of the crisis, we were so consumed in the pursuit of money and success that we failed to look around us.

When we ceased to define ourselves through money and extravagant expenses, we acknowledged certain things we weren't even aware of:

Walking in the sun, leaving ourselves to its touch and feeling its warmth!
Moving through greenery, strolling in the seashore and enjoy the breeze.
We discovered an element that in our country is given to us abundantly:
the sea! We interpreted swimming and sunbathing like never before.
Through these activities we experienced carelessness, release, joy,
redemption, peacefulness and tranquility.

FALLING HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE AND ESCAPE FROM THE DARKNESS

What terminated our darkness was falling head over heels in love.
Sharing infinite hours alongside another human being entering their
world and let them enter yours. While riding the rosy cloud, we were
immune to the machiavellisms of the crisis. Such was our desire for
companionship and sharing of joy and sorrow.

LOVE AND RESPECT OURSELVES: A RESPONSE TO SELF ACCUSE AND SHAME

Through the process of searching ourselves we came in touch with
values almost forgotten such as respect and love for ourselves,
authenticity, decisiveness.

Our workers rights being neglected, with less financial means than ever,
(if we were lucky not to be unemployed) we found out that we couldn't
live feeling hanging on the line, as nothing within the work environment
was granted any more. Some of us decided to create our personal job.
We used our ability to restart, we named it 'a reset' and realized that our
dreams can still come true. Having the knowledge that came through
self awareness, we cried to ourselves and to others who wanted to
diminish us that 'we deserve the best!' And there came our commitment:
to improve ourselves and our relationships with the others.

INHERITED VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, COMMITMENTS, PRINCIPALS, INTENTIONS.

Not giving up in difficulties, courage

Patience and perseverance

The realization that life brings difficulties but we can fight them and
become winners!

Those are some of the legacies we inherited from our ancestors. Our
mother has taught us to be patient. We reinterpreted this value thanks

to our soul-searching, because crisis obliged us to dig deep inside. This knowledge has helped us through the dark hours of our lives. Thanks to perseverance, we went on with studies, struggling for a better day to come in our lives. Our fathers' legacy was not to let ourselves down when we are faced with difficulties so we came in touch with the sense of being a winner. There is a very precious knowledge of being health and all the possibilities that come with this and of course the ability of being alive and enjoying the moment of everyday life.

ORAL RITUAL 'SEEKING COMMUNITIES'

Once the document was finished the process moved from 'the written word to an oral ritual' 'There is an opportunity for ceremonial retelling (Myerhoff 1982; White 1999) for a ceremonial retelling of the document to those who contributed to it'. 'It's quite something one's own words and phrases spoken back to you in a collective voice. It's a special experience about linking people around their own skills and knowledge of dealing with hardship.'

Through the oral recitation of the collective document of ours, a shared sense of unity was generated. It was a particular type of 'communitas' (Turner, 1969 ;1979) and that was not only an acknowledgement of shared suffering but also of shared values, dreams, goals, skills and knowledge.

Conveying this double storied memory is not only the story of trauma or hardship that is retold, but also the responses, the courageous and caring actions. Documenting and performing these testimonies of survival and trauma can also contribute to collective memory according to Bruner '...the typical form of framing experience (and our memory of it) is in narrative form, and What does not get structured narratively suffers loss in memory' (1990, p.56). Our document, was shared with an audience struggling and dealing with similar issues through a definitional ceremony on the 8th of May 2015 by recruiting outsider witnesses testimonies.

ENABLING CONTRIBUTION THROUGH THE DEFINITIONAL CEREMONY AND BY RECRUITING OUTSIDER WITNESSES TESTIMONIES

Outsider-witness practices challenge the isolating and individualizing effects of problems as Hugh Fox describes: 'Narrative practice is founded on the idea that the stories we tell about ourselves are not private and individual but are a social achievement'

'...outsider witnesses help to meet these two purposes acknowledging our identity claims as valid, and sharing about what is important to us in life. In this way, the people we work with come to experience themselves and their preferred identity claims as part of a community of acknowledgement.'

During the narrative event on the 8th of May and after having read the collective document which came through my research, following Barbara Myerhoff's (1986) and Michael White observations(1995), I focused on the role of outsider witnesses in authenticating the people's identity claims (members of the research team). As in therapeutic practice, definitional ceremonies are divided into three distinct stages (M.White, 1987, 'Maps of Narrative Practice', p.185) and our definitional ceremony was structured accordingly:

1. The telling of the significant life story by the person for whom the definitional ceremony is about.
2. The retelling of a story by the people invited to be outsider witnesses.
3. The retelling of the outsider witnesses retelling which is done by the person for whom the definitional ceremony is for.

A. INVESTIGATING THE PERSON IN THE CENTER: THE TELLING OF THE SIGNIFICANT LIFE STORY

Within the context of my project, I attended the following process:

First stage: The person in the center, a representant of the research team, read the collective document.

Second stage: I used the four categories of inquiry to the representative of the team (M. White, 1987, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, p. 190) asking first on the expressions which caught their attention or captured their imagination. Second, the focus was on the image and I asked questions to describe any images that came to her mind as she was reading the document images evoked by the expressions. These images might have taken the form of certain metaphors about the peoples life and members of the team of my research. During this second stage, I encouraged the person in the center to talk about what these metaphors and mental pictures might reflect about her own and other people's purposes, values, beliefs, hopes, aspirations and dreams about what she and the others intended for in their lives and what they valued most.

Third stage: the focus on personal resonance

I encouraged the person in the centre to focus on her understanding about whether these expressions and images struck a chord in her own personal history, establish her own 'embodied interest' and speak of what experiences in her own history came into memory on account of these expressions.

Fourth stage: the focus was on transport

I invited the person in the center to speak of the ways in which she has been moved on account of being present to witness these stories of life within the collective document. Where this experience has taken her with regard to her own thoughts, including her reflections on her own existence, her understanding of her own life. 'This acknowledgement will be an account of how his life has been touched in ways that have contributed to your becoming someone other than you were before you witnessed the person expressions and had the opportunity to respond to them' (*maps of narrative practice*, White, Norton p.192)

B INVESTIGATING THE OUTSIDER WITNESSES: THE RETELLING OF THE STORY

The outsider witnesses process carried on by recruiting two persons who weren't members of my research team with whom I used the outsider witness scaffold simultaneously:

Identifying the expression

What were you drawn to in what you heard?

Identifying the image

What picture of the subject of their life does this bring to your mind?

What does this suggest about what is important to them, what they are hoping for or what they aspire to?

Identifying resonance

What is it in your own life that this struck a chord with?

Identifying transport

How have you been affected by listening about these peoples lives?

What new understandings of your own life do you have?

How might this affect your own actions?

C INVESTIGATING THE PERSON IN THE CENTER: THE RETELLING OF THE TELLING

I addressed Ariti, the person in the center, the same questionnaire as with the outsider witnesses before and I invited her to speak about the outsider witnesses' reflections around hers and the other nine people's life stories contained in the collective document.

WHAT ARITI, THE OUTSIDERS WITNESSES AND THE AUDIENCE ANSWERED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Ariti's answers, her responses during her telling of her significant story after the reading of the collective document and her telling of the retelling (her responses to the outsider witnesses accounts):

'-What drew my attention is that all the people whose responses to the crisis are contained in the collective document, felt the need to do something about this situation while struggling to get out in the glade. Phrases such 'Let's do something about it' or words like 'reset' let me assume that there is starting from scratch by changing our point of view about certain things. When my husband left abroad to seek employment, I felt hanging on the line. My working hours were reduced and I began soul-searching. It was as if I were dropped in the ocean, unknown waters for me. I felt the need to search inside me so I took up seminars and discovered values like respecting myself, love, sincerity and solidarity.

I felt a strong desire to stand on my two feet. Witnessing all these stories of resistance, I have the **image of ten people walking across a dark forest, trying to find their path, their footprints and to get out in the light**. I can see their struggle for survival, but I can also see the sun they looked at. I can feel the warmth of their family bonds, their love for their fellow human beings. I think we all ten, have a positive trait within us and '**we deserve the best**' as it has been said. I have been through all this hardship, on financial, family and personal level but I acknowledge that there is a positive change; 'when you hit rock bottom, you can get out of this. It's like you are stuck in a well but you are able to grab and climb yourself to the light!'

'Hearing what the witnesses had to say about their lives, I feel I am a positive person and I liked inspiring other people to see things from a different perspective. I noticed that they received an **extremely positive energy** and this is what I most keep with me'.

THE OUTSIDER WITNESSES ANSWERS: CHRYSA AND ELENI

-What mostly touched me was **escaping through nature** but also other stories relating to **solidarity, sharing, support, and this relieving feeling of love**

-The phrase that drew my attention is: **'I deserve the best!'** This opens up a whole new world for me. I was also touched by proximity. Both the outsider witnesses said they can see the values of these people, their intentions and their positive thinking, their courage, and also their will to take life into their own hands. With regard to how all this is related to their own lives, it was heard that positive energy is contagious, the rosy cloud sweeps them off their feet. All this triggered **images** in the witnesses minds: - **'we were stuck in the mud and it took a tremendous effort to release ourselves; there is hope, we can see the light.'** There is **another image**: **'us sunk in the sea, deeply inhaling in order to get out'**. Also, the image of **'two people holding hands and sharing life'**.

Relating to the identity of the people's stories included in the collective document , in particular the **mortgage, help for buying a new cooker, the chocolate pie offer, the sharing**, all these convey their **values**: solidarity, friendship, camaraderie, courage , stubbornness, building of relationships.

The two outsider witnesses were affected by the stories they had listened to. One felt her life relating to others through the **love cloud** which helped her to overcome difficulties in her own life. The other one said that through the stories she had witnessed she came to believe she is a person of value. Alongside this belief, she manages to get rid of anxiety and fear. The quote **'We deserve the best'** is something she strives to believe. The whole process gave them the trigger to look deep inside, to obtain courage and positive thinking through the resistance of the others and to apply their optimistic message by taking life into their own hands.

INVESTIGATING THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS OF THE TEAM RESEARCH AND THE AUDIENCE ATTENDING THE 8TH MAY 2015 EVENT

The other participants of the team responses

During this definitional ceremony on the 8th May, honoring the skills of Greek people dealing with the bad effects of the crisis I asked them what was it that drew their attention among what they had listened to and what might this resonate about their own identity, their aspirations, hopes, achievements and their history. Here are their responses:

Niki: All people have a lot of strength inside, more than we ourselves think. The adverse conditions surface this strength, and I came to realize this during this ceremony, but through my own life experiences as well.

Evi: I was sunk into non-existence. Unbelievably, there were helping hands! These were friends, not relatives; people that I hadn't even shared my problem with. I liked the fact that my story was authenticated by young people and I got rid of the belief of being shallow to have these values.

Lida: The day I was interviewed for your research I felt like the day was brighter because I realized what I had done. This interview brought out my positive traits, it made my day! It was an extraordinary experience because I realized that depression is a state of mind and I also realized that I was taking positive steps. I was made aware of my resistance and it felt bright. I also felt that I am not alone in hardship and the problem became smaller and smaller until it almost disappeared.

Aggeliki: I felt touched by all the stories and I experienced a multitude of feelings.

Kostas: Listening to parts of my story being commented by the narrator and witnesses I was honored that my experience was singled out. I also felt a bit embarrassed and naked due to my timid nature. I was touched that my experience was not for nothing but instead contributed and inspired others and I felt that I was helping witnesses taking some elements off their chest.

Irini: I will refer to the narrative interview of the research and the whole procedure. I felt relieved and left with a smile on my face. I thoroughly enjoyed the procedure. Coming to the outsider witnesses ceremony and the related story, I was touched very much when it comes to my everyday life. I was also intrigued that all responses have a positive element in them, and I have made some notes about them. For instance, the sea, nature, the desire to share yourself emotionally.

During the event, the whole ceremony was framed and completed with melodies and songs of the participants that are meaningful to them concerning their music and lyrics.

QUESTIONS TO THE AUDIENCE

In the end, I asked the audience if they would like to make a statement about what they had attended to, what had mostly drawn their attention and whether they had any inquiries about the whole event that would like to address the organizers of the event and the official guests of ours; Dr. Harvatis Adam, director of the Narrative Institute of Thessaloniki, and his assistant, narrative psychologist Cassandra Petersen.

the audiences responses

Salome: What drew my attention was that whatever happens, even if we take the wrong steps, we dust ourselves up and move on.

Maria: I was impressed by the fact that all these people were able to overcome obstacles and elevate themselves.

Michael: It was extremely impressive to me that all those people reacted in a positive way.

Smaragda: Experiencing all this procedure, it felt like the crisis was gradually shrinking to the point of disappearance. I appreciate your work and I focus on the new self that is emerging through all this, we are all related to each other; it's like a red thread connecting everybody. There are skills and a positive side to every one of us.

Lia: What really impressed me was the value of feelings. We leave the material world behind and enter the emotional one. For example, friends helping each other and in order to do so, they leave arrogance behind and turn to their fellow human being. Attending all this procedure I was fascinated by this intense emotional world having to do with love, solidarity, respect, hope and originality.

CONCLUSION

Greece, the ancient domicile of Gods, is nowadays experiencing grave adversity. The financial Crisis has penetrated every single aspect of the social, political, and even personal life of the Greek populace.

I resolved to interview ten people randomly and was involved in externalising conversations with them having as aim to encourage them to move from an identity of Crisis to an identity of hope.

I collected their responses to the Crisis abuse and their stories of resistance. To my astonishment, the participants had developed skills and knowledge in dealing with hardship and abuse. Their stories of resistance were diverse, they nonetheless partook of a common trait; they were all aware they won't capitulate.

It's an understatement to say I was profoundly touched by their accounts; some people offered chocolate pie to their beloved relatives; others turned to nature and the delights it has to offer; some other persons rediscovered their long-lost bonds with relatives while others were stricken by the arrow of Aphrodite, the ancient Goddess of love.

I am deeply convinced that all those people were able to manage thanks to their core beliefs and inherited values. It was through the definitional ceremony on the 8th of May by recruiting outsider witnesses' testimonies that I enabled contribution.

After having listened to the outsider witnesses, and the audience's responses, I truly felt very satisfied about the results of my research. This sentiment of fulfillment came from my realization that the aim of my research which was helping people deal with life while being subjected to the turbulence of the Greek Crisis has succeeded. Additionally, what touched me most was that people's special skills, values, beliefs, knowledge and commitments were honored and authenticated by the outsider witnesses and the audience attending the event of the 8th May 2015.

When I was first involved in this project I couldn't imagine neither the volume of work it demanded including readings in Narrative practice and theory nor the effort of composition of the whole project's procedure.

I think I have helped the participants of the team research and the people attending to the event of the 8th May 2015 to engage in the reinterpretation of the Crisis' abuse they were subjected to.

Through their positive accounts getting in touch with values, beliefs, skills almost neglected although installed in their soul by their ancestors, people who attended the definitional ceremony on the 8th May 2015 left the presentation joyful, optimistic and full of positive energy since they realized ways to escape the Crisis abuse which helped them comfort themselves.

Linking with other people, enjoying the nature, developing resetting skills and respecting themselves they were found to migrate from an identity of Crisis to the one of hope.

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